Records of Rare and Uncommon British Species of *Idiocerus* (Hem. – Hom., Cicadellidae), with Special Reference to an Unnoticed Habit of *I. poecilus* Kbm.

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I. herrichi Kbm. — Apparently the rarest and most restricted of our 17 species of this interesting genus of leafhoppers, now that *I. cupreus* Kbm. (=*aurulentus* Kbm.) has been dropped from the list — aberrant forms of *I. vitreus* F. having been mistaken for it. Edwards (1896: 100-1) based his record of *herrichi* as British on a few specimens taken by himself in two East Norfolk localities, Stratton Strawless and Caister-by-Norwich, on the white willow; Le Quesne (1965: 27) cites these and also Eaton, the latter derived from two examples in the BMNH taken subsequently by Edwards (16.ix.98). All three places are in the Norwich area. The species may well be truly confined in our fauna to East Anglia, like a number of other insects, though probably not to the one county, and should be sought more widely in that region on its host tree *Salix alba* L.

Whilst collecting at Cockley Cley, near Swaffham, West Norfolk, on 2nd September, 1973, with my friend Mr. A. W. Gould, I swept an *Idiocerus* from white willow in a corner of a field, which proved, as expected, to be *herrichi* (♀), clearly exhibiting all the characters given for that species by Le Quesne (*l.c.*); it is now in the collection of my friend, Mr. Dudley Collins. More might well have been obtained, had not a large herd of cattle headed by a bull, advancing too close and purposefully for our equanimity, brought the proceedings to an abrupt and premature end. This would seem to be the first capture of *I. herrichi* in the western vice-county, and as far as I am aware the first this century.

I. poecilus H.-S. — A hitherto scarce or seldom recorded poplar-feeding species, known from a mere handful of British localities north of the Thames in Berks., Bucks., and Oxon. (one to each county) and two in the Norwich district (cf. Edwards, *l.c.* and Le Quesne, *l.c.*). On the night of 11th August, 1973, a male example came to m.v. light at Blackheath, evidently the first to be noted in Kent or the London suburbs, or indeed anywhere south of the Thames. Hard work in the following days at the nearest poplars, or such of them as could be reached, produced no more. However, on 17th July, 1975, I found a specimen of this hopper in a crevice of bark on the trunk of a Lombardy poplar (*Populus italica* Moench) at one end of a row of these trees fringing a sports-ground at Kidbrooke, near Blackheath, which I was in the habit of working for insects from time to time. On another visit nine days later, half-a-dozen more were found, on that and the adjacent tree. Next, a number of *I. poecilus* flew to m.v. light here at Charlton during the hot spell in late June-

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July 1976, but a search for the species on some of the many local poplars was unsuccessful. Finally, it was somewhat common at the Kidbrooke locality on 12th July that year, having by then spread to many of the trees in the row; I was surprised, therefore, to see none there on my latest visit (30.vii.77), though probably it was not in fact absent. As I was concentrating more on sweeping the foliage — wishing to see whether *poecilus* would turn up in the net, which it never did either then or previously — some may have been missed on the trunks, but there must in any case have been a great reduction in numbers from the foregoing season.

These findings, such as they are, appear to suggest that the habit of resting on the trunks — instead of on the leafy stems and amongst the foliage like other Idioceri — may be a peculiarity of *I. poecilus* and, if so, might cause it to be often overlooked. It is possible that the present species, unlike its congeners, rests mainly by day and feeds at night. Tending to favour this hypothesis are two facts: first, all those found appeared truly at rest, being more or less ensconced in chinks or fissures of bark and moving only when disturbed, in contrast to the active state of other Idioceri occurring casually on the trunks; and second, the disruptive style of coloration of *poecilus* makes it less conspicuous there than other species. The fact of its flying to light has, perhaps, less bearing on the question, as the habit is so widespread even among many Auchenorrhyncha and other more or less diurnal insects. Nevertheless, it may be significant that, although I have had occasional specimens of *I. vitreus* to the lamp at Blackheath (scarcely more than one in any year), *poecilus* was the only *Idiocerus* that came to it at Charlton — at the rate, moreover, of up to 4 or 5 on one night.

I. elegans Flor. — Dr. Le Quesne does not list separate counties for this handsome sallow-feeding species, but it is local and infrequent and there may not be a previous record for the suburban north-west corner of Kent, where it must surely be rare. Mr. Collins has met with it chiefly in Surrey, e.g. on Bookham and Chobham Commons. On 15th July last I swept a solitary example from a bush of *Salix caprea* L., its usual host, by a dike on what used to be the Abbey Wood Marshes — not far from here — but is now the western edge of Thamesmead. The occurrence of *I. elegans* there was unexpected, as much from the comparative scarcity of the foodplant as from the lack of previous captures in the district.

I. rutilans Kbm. — Taken by Mr. D. Collins at Brook, New Forest, seemingly the first record for Hampshire; elsewhere he has found it mostly in Surrey (Esher and Chobham Commons); on various occasions in all three places. Another sallow-feeder, much localised and somewhat scarce, as a rule not occurring with *elegans* to which it is closely allied. I once took a specimen of *rutilans* at Oxshott, one of the two Surrey localities where it was first captured in Britain by W. West some time before 1908, but have never seen it there since.

I. vittifrons Kbm. — Mr. Collins has this species from Bookham Common and Box Hill, both in Surrey, a county not included among those given for it by Le Quesne; again taken on various occasions. A rather rare and certainly very local species not so far met with by me, attached to field maple which I have worked for it in Windsor Park, for instance, but in vain. Its presence in my area, however, is not impossible; the host-tree, though scarce here, occurs at Shooters Hill and may yet, in time, yield the insect.

During the past decade I was able to record as many as 11 species of these leaf-hoppers from the Blackheath/Kidbrooke/Shooters Hill area of N.W. Kent (Allen, 1964). If the latter is now extended eastward to Abbey Wood, the addition of *I. poecilus* and *I. elegans* brings up the total to 13 species, which, I venture to think, compares very favourably (despite its situation in the suburbs of London) with any other published list for an area of similar extent anywhere in these islands. Jennings (1909) records having encountered the same number of species in the autumn of 1908, but his captures were from a vastly wider area.

References

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WINTER ACTIVITY. — I was surprised to come across three instar larvae of *Pieris brassicae* and two of *P. rapae* in a torpid state, but otherwise quite healthy, on the brussel sprout plants in my garden (at Milton of Capsie, Stirlingshire) on 28th December, 1977.

Larvae of both species were too abundant to be tolerated during late summer, and as the plants were suffering, were sprayed with insecticide. Even so, this left fair numbers of *brassicae* larvae, and about equal numbers of both species on nasturtium plants.

During late autumn the first frosts killed off the annual plants; for periods of several days the BBC weather bulletin (conditions as at 05.00 hrs.) reported temperatures in Glasgow below freezing (generally between −6 and −3°C.). The presence of frass on the plants, most of it appearing quite fresh, indicates that the larvae have been active between the very cold spells, and shows that at least a percentage of the "Cabbage White" larvae are able to survive periods of frost. — J. COOTER, Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, Glasgow, G3 8AG.